

BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER

ON

LANDING GEAR

- Exposure to battlefield trauma place Airmen at risk for PTSD and other mental health problems
 - 20% of Airmen exposed to serious traumatic events in theater; less than 1% develop PTSD
- Trauma exposure is the most powerful predictor of problems following deployment; all high risk groups (e.g., security forces, medics, EOD, ILOs) face higher rates of trauma exposure
 - Airmen with history of trauma exposure are 2-4 times more likely to develop PTSD
- Most Airmen exposed to trauma will recover without assistance or complications
 - Data indicates 60% of Airmen with serious traumatic stress symptoms won't recover without help; prompt medical intervention (i.e., psychotherapy) greatly improves outcomes
 - Brief training is effective at improving risk recognition and help seeking behavior
- Landing Gear serves as a bridge to care designed to increase the identification of Airmen suffering from traumatic stress symptoms and connect them with appropriate helping resources
 - Provides standardized approach to mental health requirements for pre-exposure preparation training for deploying Airmen and reintegration education for redeploying Airmen
 - Based on metaphor that, no matter how powerful an aircraft is in the air, properly functioning landing gear is necessary to safely launch and recover; effective risk recognition and help seeking behavior are the functional equivalent of landing gear for Airmen
- Course Overview
 - Standardized but flexible lesson plan that can be tailored to audience needs
 - Primary briefers will be mental health personnel; qualified IDS members can be utilized
 - Installation will determine the frequency and scheduling of classes based on local needs
 - Class length will be tailored to needs of audience, but typical length is 30-60 minutes
 - Impromptu classes for short or no notice deployments may be much briefer
 - Classes for groups of high risk Airmen may last longer to encourage open discussion

- While Landing Gear effectively addresses needs of both deploying and redeploying Airmen, the concerns of these two groups are different and classes should be conducted separately
- Can be accomplished as a freestanding class conducted by Mental Health Personnel, or in conjunction with briefings by the Airman & Family Readiness Center and Chaplains
- Course Content: All subject headings linked to operational metaphors
 - Deployment Stress (Pre-Flight Checklist)
 - Deployed Environment (Gear Up)
 - Typical Reactions (In Flight)
 - Reintegration and Reunion (Recovery to Home Station)
 - Prevention (Routine Maintenance & Inspection)
 - Getting Help (Troubleshooting & Repair)
- Landing Gear: Pre-Deployment (Purpose is to prepare Airmen to cope with traumatic events)
 - Landing Gear fulfills requirements for pre-exposure training (IAW AFI 44-153, para 3)
 - Base commanders and mental health personnel determine which personnel require training
 - Ideally, all Airmen will attend course before deploying
 - At minimum, deployers from high risk groups should attend
 - Pre-deployment classes cover Deployment Stress, Deployed Environment, Typical Reactions, Prevention, and Getting Help sections
 - Reintegration and Reunion previewed to lay foundation for what to expect after deployment
- Landing Gear: Post-Deployment (Purpose is to facilitate smooth reentry into work/family life)
 - Landing Gear fulfills requirements for mental health component of reintegration education (IAW AFI 10-403, Chapter 8, para 8.10.2.3.1), which is required for all returning Airmen
 - Reintegration classes review Deployment Stress, Deployed Environment, and Prevention sections, but emphasize Typical Reactions, Reintegration and Reunion, and Getting Help
- Detailed instructions are provided in course materials (executive brief, overview, curriculum slides, training manual, and talking paper), which are available on-line at <http://afspp.afms.mil>